

and streaks etc.). On the average 21 eggs measured  $26.2 \times 19.5$  mm. and weighed 5.9 grams.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,  
WESTERN REGIONAL STATION,  
1182/2, F.C. ROAD,  
POONA-5.

B. S. LAMBA

November 24, 1966.

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#### 5. THE HOUSE CROW (*CORVUS SPLENDENS*, VIEILLOT) FEEDING ON THE INDIAN DESERT GERBIL (*MERIONES HURRIANAE*, JERDON)

A house crow (*Corvus splendens*) was observed on the grounds of the Central Arid Zone Research Institute (Jodhpur, Rajasthan) with a gerbil (*Meriones hurrianae*) in its beak. The crow dropped the gerbil which immediately ran off through the light ground cover. The crow, half flying and jumping, quickly caught it again and shook it several times before releasing it. The gerbil started to run off again so the crow scooped it up and flew across the road to a bare patch of ground. He shook the gerbil again and dropped it. This time because of the lack of cover and the unfamiliar territory, the crow had no trouble catching the gerbil as it started off again. This was repeated several times before the gerbil lay in place where it was dropped. The crow gave it a couple of pecks and then picked it up and flew to the top of a nearby power pole. From the slackness of the gerbil's body, it was at least unconscious if not dead. The crow then proceeded to hold it under its feet while it pecked the body apart.

The original observations indicated that the gerbil was in good condition but had apparently been caught by the crow when it was too far from its burrow. The sagacity of the crow in taking the gerbil to bare ground and its agility in recapturing it, indicates that these could be very efficient predators of gerbils if they would put their mind to the task. This is an addition to the list of avian predators of gerbils listed by Prakash (*Mammalia*, 26 (3) : 311-331, 1962).

UNESCO CONSULTANT,  
C.A.Z.R.I., JODHPUR.

WILLIAM D. FITZWATER

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